



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/880,777	06/15/2001	Keira Brooke Bard	05793.3065	7834
22852 7590 07/19/2007 FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW, GARRETT & DUNNER LLP 901 NEW YORK AVENUE, NW WASHINGTON, DC 20001-4413			EXAMINER OYEBISI, OJO O	
			ART UNIT 3692	PAPER NUMBER
			MAIL DATE 07/19/2007	DELIVERY MODE PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

## Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/880,777

Applicant(s)

BARD ET AL.

Examiner

OJO O. OYEBISI

Art Unit

3692

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 April 2007.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-12, 14-28, 30-40, 42-58, 60-88 and 90-120 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.

- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-12, 14-28, 30-40, 42-58, 60-88 and 90-120 is/are rejected.

- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.

- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:

1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.

3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.

4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)

Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_.

5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application

6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

Art Unit: 3692

### DETAILED ACTION

In the amendment filed on 04/20/07, the following have occurred: claims 1-12, 14-28, 30-40, 42-58, 60-88 and 90-120 remain pending in the present application and no new claims have been added. The applicant's argument in the response dated 04/20/07 has necessitated the withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112 first and second paragraphs.

### *Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103*

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
  2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
  3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
  4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.
2. Claims 1-12, 14-28, 30-40, 42-58, 60-88 and 90-120 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Sears Tests Starter Card** (Sears

Art Unit: 3692

hereinafter, Card Fax News Brief Vol. 1997, n. 21, p. 1, January 28, 1997) in

view of Walker et al (Walker hereinafter, US PAT:6,018,718).

Re claim 1. Sears discloses a method for providing a credit account to a customer of an account issuer that provides a starter credit account associated with starter credit account parameters and a standard credit account associated with standard credit account parameters more favorable than the starter credit account parameters, comprising: **receiving** a request for the standard credit account from the customer (i.e., the new low credit approach will undoubtedly save many of those denied applicants who do not fit into sears existing modeling programs pg 1, lines 36-39); **providing** a starter credit account in place of the standard credit account to the customer (i.e., sears plan to roll out a low credit line starter card by June, the card which will feature a smaller credit limit than the traditional sears card, pg 1 lines 17-25); **monitoring** the customer's activities associated with the starter credit account during a trial period to determine whether the customer has satisfied predetermined criteria (i.e., the retailer expects most new card holders to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see page 1, lines 30-34, this process inherently involves monitoring); and **upgrading** at least one of the starter credit account parameters to match at least one of the standard credit account parameters when the customer has satisfied the predetermined criteria (i.e., new customers are expected to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see pg 1 lines 30-35). Sears does not explicitly disclose **modifying** the duration of the trial period based on the monitored customer's activities associated with the starter credit account. However, Walker discloses **modifying** the duration of the trial

Art Unit: 3692

period based on the monitored customer's activities associated with the starter credit account (i.e., establishing a second period to incent the card holder to exceed his present performance, see col.11 lines 30-34). Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker to incent the card holder to exceed his present performance.

Re claim 2. Sears discloses the method wherein the starter credit account parameters include at least a starter credit limit (i.e., \$1000.00, see lines 23-25). Sears does not explicitly disclose wherein monitoring the customer's activities comprises: determining whether the customer has an outstanding balance associated with the starter credit limit; and determining whether the customer has made a payment toward the outstanding balance. However, Walker discloses wherein monitoring the customer's activities comprises: determining whether the customer has an outstanding balance (i.e., quarterly outstanding balance, see fig.4 element 414) associated with the starter credit limit; and determining whether the customer has made a payment toward the outstanding balance (promptness of payments, see col.7 lines 60-67). Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the teachings of walker into the starter card of Sears in order to better manage individual accounts to maximize profit per account.

Re claim 3. Sears does not explicitly disclose the method, wherein determining whether the customer has made a payment further comprises: determining whether the

Art Unit: 3692

customer has made the payment within an acceptable period of time. However, Walker discloses the method, wherein determining whether the customer has made a payment further comprises: determining whether the customer has made the payment within an acceptable period of time. (Promptness of payments, see col.7 lines 60-67). Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the teachings of walker into the starter card of Sears in order to better manage individual accounts to maximize profit per account.

Re claim 4. Sears further discloses the method, wherein upgrading at least one of the starter credit account parameters comprises: increasing a starter credit limit associated with the starter credit account when the customer has satisfied the predetermined criteria (i.e., the retailer expects most new card holders to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see page 1, lines 30-34).

Re claim 5. Sears further discloses the method as stated supra, wherein upgrading at least one of the starter credit account parameters comprises: increasing a starter credit limit associated with the starter credit account. Sears does not expressly disclose adjusting an interest rate associated with the starter credit account when the customer has satisfied the predetermined criteria during the trial period. However, Walker discloses adjusting an interest rate associated with the credit account when the customer has satisfied the predetermined criteria during the trial period (i.e., reward terms, see APR, fig.4 ELEMENT 420). Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the teachings of

walker into the starter card of Sears in order to encourage customers to keep their account in good standing.

Re claim 6. Sears discloses the method wherein the predetermined criteria includes at least one of making a predetermined number of consecutive on time payments, and not exceeding the starter credit limit (i.e., the retailer expects most new card holders to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see page 1, lines 30-34).

Re claim 7. Neither Sears nor Walker expressly discloses the method wherein the step of upgrading at least one of the starter credit account parameters is replaced with: downgrading at least one of the starter credit account parameters based on the monitoring. Although, Sears does not explicitly make this disclosure, however, it is obvious to anyone that if the reward for a customer keeping his starter account in good standing is upgrading at least one the parameters of the said starter account, then the penalty for poor account standing would be exact opposite of upgrading, which is downgrading the least of one the parameters of the said starter account. This is well-known in the art.

Re claim 8. Neither Sears nor Walker expressly discloses the method, downgrading further comprises: determining that the customer has not met a predetermined criteria during the trial period based on the monitoring; and restarting the trial period. However, It is common sense to know that if the trial period leaves the customer in poor account standing i.e., the customer fails to meet predetermined criteria, the customer would be penalized and his account would be downgraded. Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to either kick the customer out of the program all together

or restart the trial period for the said customer to give the said customer a second chance of putting his account in good standing.

Re claim 9. Neither Sears nor Walker expressly discloses the method of downgrading further comprises: determining that the customer has not met a predetermined criteria during the trial period based on the monitoring; preventing use of the starter credit account to purchase goods and/or services; increasing an interest rate associated with the starter credit account; and accessing penalty fees to the starter credit account.

These are all well-known penalties that are visited on customers that put their accounts in poor standing i.e., customers that fail to meet the predetermined criteria. For example, In 1997, I applied for my first credit card through MBNA America. On the credit card application, I requested for \$1500 credit limit. However, after my application was processed and approved, the credit limit offered to me was \$800. No sooner had I received the credit card than I called MBNA to find out why they gave me a credit limit of \$800 as opposed to \$1500, their reason was that based on the mechanism they use to extend credit limit to new customers, \$800 was the maximum amount they could extend to me at this time, and that is subject to change with time depending on the standing of my account. For the first six months, my account was in poor standing, and I received a call from MBNA informing me that based on my account standing, my APR has been raised and the fact that I was over my credit limit, my charging right has been suspended. I worked tirelessly to bring my account current, and I was able to achieve this in three months. About four months thereafter, I received another call from MBNA, offering to extend my credit limit from \$800 to \$1500,



Art Unit: 3692

and at the same time reducing my annual APR. This personal story constitutes the applicant disclosure stated supra, which is old and well-known in the art. Thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the old and well known penalties stated supra in Sears to discourage customers from putting their accounts in poor standing.

Re claim 10. Sears discloses a method for providing a credit account to a customer of a credit issuer that provides a starter credit account associated with starter credit account parameters and a standard credit account associated with standard credit account parameters more favorable than the starter credit account parameters, comprising: **providing** a starter credit account to a customer (i.e., sears plan to roll out a low credit line starter card by June, the card which will feature a smaller credit limit than the traditional sears card, pg 1 lines 17-25), wherein the customer is not eligible to receive a standard credit account; **monitoring** the customer's activities associated with the starter credit account during a trial period to determine whether the customer has satisfied predetermined criteria during the trial period (i.e., the retailer expects most new card holders to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see page 1, lines 30-34, this process inherently involves monitoring); and **modifying** the starter credit account parameters based on the monitoring (i.e., the retailer expects most new card holders to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see page 1, lines 30-34) (see pg 1 of Sears), wherein modifying includes upgrading at least one of the starter credit account parameters to match at least one of the standard credit account parameters when the customer has satisfied the predetermined criteria during the trial

Art Unit: 3692

period (i.e., new customers are expected to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see pg 1 lines 30-35). Sears does not explicitly disclose **notifying** the customer of unsatisfied predetermined criteria during the trial period. However, Walker makes this disclosure (i.e., As shown, at step 618, CCI 200 outputs a periodic account statement to inform card holder 112 of the reward offer. The periodic account statement includes the performance target, the target period and the reward terms to induce card holder 112 to behave in a manner prescribed by the credit card issuer and achieve the communicated performance target during the target period. Although the periodic statement of the present embodiment is a written communication between the issuer and the card holder, the communication could take any number of forms including updating a database accessible by the card holder or transmitting an electronic or facsimile representation of a periodic statement, see col9 lines 42-55, also see fig.6 elements 624 and 628). Thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker to inform the card holder of their accounts status.

Re claim 11. Claim 11 recites similar limitations to claim 2, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 2.

Re claim 12. Claim 12 recites similar limitations to claim 3, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 3.

Re claim 14. Claim 14 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Art Unit: 3692

Re claim 15. Claim 15 recites similar limitations to claim 6, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 6.

Re claim 16. Claim 16 recites similar limitations to claim 7, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 7.

Re claims 17: Claims 17 recites similar limitations to claim 8, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 8.

Re claims 18. Claims 18 recite similar limitations to claim 9, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 9.

Re claim 19. Sears further discloses a method for providing a credit account to a customer of a credit issuer that provides a starter credit account associated with starter credit account parameters and a standard credit account associated with standard credit account parameters more favorable than the starter credit account parameters, comprising: determining a group of customers with existing credit histories who have not previously applied for the standard credit account and are eligible for the starter credit account, wherein the customers included in the group each have a credit profile (i.e., consumers with very thin and non-existent credit histories, pg 1 lines 18-20) that prevents the customers from obtaining the standard credit account; upgrading the account parameters associated with the ranked customer based on the determination(i.e., the credit limit is raised pg 1 lines 32-33). Sears does not explicitly disclose ranking the customers included in the group providing a starter credit account to each customer included in the group, wherein parameters associated with each starter credit account vary based on the rank of each customer; determining a trial

period for each ranked customer; determining, for each ranked customer, a predetermined criteria that the customer must satisfy for the starter credit account parameters to be upgraded and for each ranked customer: determining whether the ranked customer has met the predetermined criteria during the trial period. However, Walker discloses ranking the customers included in the group providing a starter credit account to each customer included in the group, wherein parameters associated with each starter credit account vary based on the rank of each customer; determining a trial period for each ranked customer; determining, for each ranked customer, a predetermined criteria that the customer must satisfy for the starter credit account parameters to be upgraded and for each ranked customer: determining whether the ranked customer has met the predetermined criteria during the trial period (see col.7 lines 14-67). Thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the teachings of Walker into the starter card of Sears to better manage individual accounts to maximize profit per account.

Re claim 20. Claim 20 recites similar limitations to claim 4, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 4.

Re claim 21. Claim 21 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Re claim 22. Sears further discloses the method as stated supra wherein adjusting the account parameters comprises: adjusting the account parameters to reflect parameters equivalent to parameters associated with the standard credit account when the

Art Unit: 3692

customer has met the predetermined criteria (i.e., adjust the credit limit, see lines 32-33).

Re claim 23. Claim 23 recites similar limitations to claim 8, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 8.

Re claim 24. The limitation in claim 24 is one of the limitations recited in claim 9 above, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 9.

Re claim 25. Claim 25 recites a limitation that is one of the limitations recited in claim 19, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 19.

Re claim 26. Sears further discloses the method wherein the predetermined criteria includes at least one of making a number of consecutive on-time payments, and not exceeding a credit limit associated with the starter credit account (i.e., The retailer expects cardholders to pay on time, see lines 30-35).

Re claim 27. Claim 27 recites similar limitations to claim 26 and thus rejected using the same art and rationale as in claim 26.

Re claim 28. Sears further discloses the method for providing credit accounts, comprising: receiving a request from a customer for a first credit account associated with a first account parameters included a first credit limit and a first interest rate (see response to claim 1); providing to the customer a second credit account associated with second account parameters including a second credit limit and a second interest rate, wherein the second credit limit is lower than the first credit limit (i.e., the card will feature a smaller credit limit than the traditional Sears card, sears tested three, see lines 20-26); monitoring the second credit account to determine whether the customer has made a

Art Unit: 3692

predetermined number of consecutive on time payments; and changing the second credit limit to a third credit limit when it is determined that the customer has made the predetermined number of on-time payments associated with the second credit account (i.e., the credit limit can be raised, see pg 1 lines 30-35) (see Sears pg 1) wherein the third credit limit is based on a predetermined amount based on a number of on-time payments made by the customers. Sears does not explicitly disclose notifying the customer of a third credit limit while the customer is provided the Second, credit limit, the notifying; including information reflecting that the third credit limit is obtainable by making a predetermined number of consecutive on time payments and wherein the third credit limit is higher than the second credit limit and lower than the first credit limit.

However, Walker discloses notifying the customer of a third credit limit while the customer is provided the Second, credit limit (i.e., transmit reward offers to card holders, see col.4 lines 40-65), the notifying; including information reflecting that the third credit limit is obtainable by making a predetermined number of consecutive on time payments and wherein the third credit limit is higher than the second credit limit and lower than the first credit limit (i.e., performance target, see col.5 lines 60-67). Thus, it would have been obvious to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker in order to better manage individual accounts to maximize profit per account.

Re claim 30. Sears further discloses a system for providing a starter credit account, comprising: a credit issuer for providing credit accounts including a starter credit account associated with starter credit account parameters (see pg 1, lines 1-10) and a standard credit account associated with standard credit account parameters that are

Art Unit: 3692

more favorable than the starter credit account parameters (i.e., traditional sears card pg 1, lines 22-24), wherein the starter credit account is provided to a trial customer who is not eligible to obtain the standard credit account (see lines 16-29), the credit issuer comprising: a monitor process for monitoring the starter credit account to determine whether the trial customer has met predetermined criteria associated with the starter credit account during a trial period and adjusting the starter credit account parameters based on the determination (i.e., the retailer expects most new card holders to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see page 1, lines 30-34, this process inherently involves monitoring); a first memory for storing credit account information associated with standard credit account customers of the credit issuer; and a second memory for storing starter credit account information associated with the trial customer, wherein the credit issuer loads the starter credit account information stored in the second memory into the first memory after the starter credit account parameters associated with the starter credit account have been adjusted based on the determination (i.e., if this is a performance based training-wheels approach to credit, it is inherent that the individual customer's account would be monitored and the customer's account information would be stored and loaded into corresponding memory). Sears does not explicitly disclose a trial period **modifying process for modifying** the duration of the trial period based on the monitored customer's activities associated with the starter credit account. However, Walker discloses **modifying** the duration of the trial period based on the monitored customer's activities associated with the starter credit account (i.e., establishing a second period to incent the card holder to

Art Unit: 3692

exceed his present performance, see col.11 lines 30-34). Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker to incent the card holder to exceed his present performance.

Re claim 31. Claim 31 recites similar limitations to claim 4, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 4.

Re claims 32, 33. Claims 32 and 33 recite similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Re claim 34. Sears does not explicitly disclose the system wherein the credit limit is reduced to zero. However, it is common sense to know that if the credit limit is reduced to Zero, the customer is basically prevented from using his starter credit account to purchase goods and/or services. Since this is one of the limitations recited in claim 9, thus claim 34 is rejected using the same rationale given for the rejection of that limitation in claim 9 above.

Re claim 35. Claim 35 recites similar limitations to claim 8, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 8.

Re claim 36. Claim 36 recites limitations that are part of the limitations recited in claim 19, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of those limitations in claim 19 above.

Re claims 37 and 38. Sears discloses a process for monitoring a starter credit account associated with a customer who is not eligible to receive a standard credit account from a credit issuer, wherein the standard credit account is associated with standard credit



Art Unit: 3692

account parameters that are more favorable than starter credit account parameters associated with the starter credit account (i.e., the new low credit approach will undoubtedly save many of those denied applicants who do not fit into sears existing modeling programs pg 1, lines 36-39), the process comprising: a process for periodically monitoring activity associated with the starter credit account for a determined trial period (i.e., the retailer expects most new card holders to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see pg 1, lines 30-40, this process inherently involves monitoring); a process for determining whether predetermined criteria has been met based on the monitored activity during the trial period, a process for increasing a credit limit associated with the starter credit account based on the determination that the predetermined criteria has been met (i.e., new customers are expected to pay on time and eventually have their credit limits raised, see pg 1 lines 30-35). Sears does not explicitly disclose a process for notifying customers of an increased credit limit that will be provided to the customer if the customer satisfies predetermined criteria; a process for notifying the customer of the predefined criteria the customer must satisfy to obtain the increased credit limit. Walker discloses a process for notifying customers of an increased credit limit that will be provided to the customer if the customer satisfies predetermined criteria; a process for notifying the customer of the predefined criteria the customer must satisfy to obtain the increased credit limit (i.e., As shown, at step 618, CCI 200 outputs a periodic account statement to inform card holder 112 of the reward offer. The periodic account statement includes the performance target, the target period and the reward terms to induce card holder 112 to behave in a

Art Unit: 3692

manner prescribed by the credit card issuer and achieve the communicated performance target during the target period. Although the periodic statement of the present embodiment is a written communication between the issuer and the card holder, the communication could take any number of forms including updating a database accessible by the card holder or transmitting an electronic or facsimile representation of a periodic statement, see col9 lines 42-55, also see fig.6 elements 624 and 628; transmit reward offers to card holders, see col.4 lines 40-65). Neither Sears nor Walker discloses a process for resetting the trial period when the activity reflects that the customer has not met the predetermined criteria. However, it is common sense to know that if the trial period leaves the customer in poor account standing i.e., the customer fails to meet predetermined criteria, the customer would be penalized and his account would be downgraded. Thus, it would have been obvious to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker in order to better manage individual accounts to maximize profit per account.

Re claim 39. Sears further disclose the process wherein the process for determining whether a predetermined criteria has been met based on the monitored activity further comprises: a process for determining that the customer has made a predetermined number of on time payments associated with the starter credit account (i.e., the retailer expects the cardholders to pay on time, see lines 30-36).

Re claim 40. Claim 40 recites similar limitations to claim 9, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 9.

Art Unit: 3692

Re claim 42. Claim 42 recites similar limitation to claim 10, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 10.

Re claim 43. Neither Sears nor Walker explicitly discloses the method wherein the second predetermined criteria is the same as the predetermined criteria. However, one of Sears predefined criteria is on time payment. Thus if, during the first trial, Sears starter credit cardholders fail to meet this predefined criterion and Sears choose to give these cardholders a second chance, it is common sense to know that these cardholders would be subject to the same predefined criterion they fail to meet in the first trial to see if they would make it in the second trial (this is what second chance is all about). Clearly in this case, the second predetermined criteria is the same as the predetermined criteria.

Re claim 44. Neither Sears nor Walker explicitly discloses the method, wherein the second predetermined criteria is not the same as the predetermined criteria. However, one of Sears predefined criteria is on time payment. Thus if, during the first trial period, Sears starter credit cardholders make their payments on time, but fail to meet other predefined criteria (i.e., keep their credit limits under control), and Sears choose to give these cardholders a second chance, it is common sense to know that these cardholders would be subject to meet those predefined criteria they fail to meet in the first trial (i.e., keep their credit limits under control). Clearly, in this case, the second predetermined criteria is not the same as the predetermined criteria.

Re claim 45. Sears further discloses the method, wherein modifying the starter credit account parameters based on the monitoring comprises: increasing a credit limit

Art Unit: 3692

associated with the starter credit account (i.e., cardholders eventually have their credit limit raised, pg 1 lines 30-35).

Re claim 46. Claim 46 recites similar limitations to claim 45, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 45.

Re claim 47. Claim 47 recites similar limitations to claim 1, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 1.

Re claim 48. Claim 48 recites similar limitations to claim 2, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 2.

Re claim 49. Claim 49 recites similar limitations to claim 3, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 3.

Re claim 50. Claim 50 recites similar limitations to claim 4, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 4.

Re claim 51. Claim 51 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Re claim 52. Claim 52 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Re claim 53. Claim 53 recites similar limitations to claim 7, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 7.

Re claim 54. Claim 54 recites similar limitations to claim 8, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 8.

Re claim 55. Claim 55 recites similar limitations to claim 9, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 9.

Art Unit: 3692

Re claim 56. Claim 56 recites similar limitations to claim 10, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 10.

Re claim 57. Claim 57 recites similar limitations to claim 2, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 2.

Re claim 58. Claim 58 recites similar limitations to claim 3, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 3.

Re claim 60. Claim 60 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Re claim 61. Claim 61 recites similar limitations to claim 6, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 6.

Re claim 62. Claim 62 recites similar limitations to claim 7, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 7.

Re claim 63. Claim 63 recites similar limitations to claim 8, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 8.

Re claim 64. Claim 64 recites similar limitations to claim 9, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 9.

Re claim 65. Claim 65 recites similar limitations to claim 19, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 19.

Re claim 66. Claim 66 recites similar limitations to claim 4, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 4.

Re claim 67. Claim 67 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Art Unit: 3692

Re claim 68. Claim 68 recites similar limitations to claim 22, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 22.

Re claim 69. Claim 69 recites similar limitations to claim 23, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 23.

Re claim 70. Claim 70 recites similar limitations to claim 24, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 24.

Re claim 71. Claim 71 recites similar limitations to claim 25, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 25.

Re claim 72. Claim 72 recites similar limitations to claim 26, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 26.

Re claim 73. Claim 73 recites similar limitations to claim 27, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 27.

Re claim 74. Claim 74 recites similar limitations to claim 28, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 28.

Re claim 75. Claim 75 recites similar limitations to claim 29, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 29.

Re claim 76. Sears discloses a computer-readable medium including instructions for performing a method, when executed by a processor, for providing credit accounts, the method comprising: receiving a request from a customer for a first credit account associated with a first account parameters included a first credit limit and a first interest rate (i.e., the traditional sears card, lines 20-29); providing to the customer a second credit account associated with second account parameters including a second credit

Art Unit: 3692

limit (i.e., low-credit line starter card, see lines 17-20); and a second interest rate; monitoring the second credit account to determine whether the customer has performed at least one of made a predetermined number of consecutive on time payments (i.e., The retailer expects the cardholders to pay on time, lines 30-35, this inherently involves monitoring) and exceeded the second credit limit (see Sears lines 1-40). Sears does not expressly disclose changing the second interest rate to a third interest rate that is higher than the first interest rate, when it is determined that the customer has made the predetermined number of on-time payments associated with the second credit account. However, Walker discloses changing the second interest rate to a third interest rate that is higher than the first interest rate, when it is determined that the customer has made the predetermined number of on-time payments associated with the second credit account (i.e., REWARD OFFER, reduced APR, see table 11, col.9 lines 1-14). Thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the teachings of Walker into the Sears to encourage customers to keep their account in good standing.

Re claim 77. Claim 77 recites similar limitations to claim 1, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 1.

Re claim 78. Claim 78 recites similar limitations to claim 2, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 2.

Re claim 79. Claim 79 recites similar limitations to claim 3, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 3.

Art Unit: 3692

Re claim 80. Claim 80 recites similar limitations to claim 4, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 4.

Re claim 81. Claim 81 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Re claim 82. Claim 82 recites similar limitations to claim 6, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 6.

Re claim 83. Claim 83 recites similar limitations to claim 7, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 7.

Re claim 84. Claim 84 recites similar limitations to claim 8, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 8.

Re claim 85. Claim 85 recites similar limitations to claim 9, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 9.

Re claim 86. Claim 81 recites similar limitations to claim 10, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 10.

Re claim 87. Claim 81 recites similar limitations to claim 11, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 11.

Re claim 88. Claim 88 recites similar limitations to claim 12, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 12.

Re claim 90. Claim 90 recites similar limitations to claim 14, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 14.

Re claim 91. Claim 91 recites similar limitations to claim 15, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 15.



Art Unit: 3692

Re claim 92. Claim 92 recites similar limitations to claim 16, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 16.

Re claim 93. Claim 93 recites similar limitations to claim 17, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 17.

Re claim 94. Claim 94 recites similar limitations to claim 18, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 18.

Re claim 95. Claim 95 recites similar limitations to claim 19, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 19.

Re claim 96. Claim 96 recites similar limitations to claim 4, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 4.

Re claim 97. Claim 97 recites similar limitations to claim 5, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 5.

Re claim 98. Claim 98 recites similar limitations to claim 22, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 22.

Re claim 99. Claim 99 recites similar limitations to claim 23, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 23.

Re claim 100. Claim 100 recites similar limitations to claim 24, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 24.

Re claim 101. Claim 101 recites similar limitations to claim 25, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 25.

Re claim 102. Claim 102 recites similar limitations to claim 26, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 26.

Re claim 103. Claim 103 recites similar limitations to claim 26, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 26.

Re claim 104. Claim 104 recites similar limitations to claim 28, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 28.

Re claim 105. Claim 105 recites similar limitations to claim 29, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 29.

Re claim 106. Claim 106 recites similar limitations to claim 76, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 76.

Re claim 107. Claim 107 recites similar limitations to claim 42, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 42.

Re claims 108. Claims 108 recites similar limitations to claim 43, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 43.

Re claim 109 . Claims 109 recites similar limitations to claim 44, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale.

Re claim 110. Claim 110 recites similar limitations to claim 45, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 45.

Re claim 111. Claim 111 recites similar limitations to claim 46, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 46.

Re claim 112. Claim 112 recites similar limitations to claim 42, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 42.

Re claim 113. Claim 113 recites similar limitations to claim 43, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 43.

Re claim 114. Claim 114 recites similar limitations claim 44, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 44.

Re claim 115. Claim 115 recites similar limitations to claim 45, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 45.

Re claim 116. Claim 116 recites similar limitations to claim 46, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 46.

Re claim 117. Claim 117 recites similar limitations to claim 76, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale in the rejection of claim 76.

Re claim 118. Sears discloses the method wherein providing a starter credit account in place of the standard credit account includes: providing the starter credit account in response to the request for the standard credit account received from the customer (i.e., the new low credit approach will undoubtedly save many of those denied applicants who do not fit into sears existing modeling programs pg 1, lines 36-39, also see "sears plan to roll out a low credit line starter card by June, the card which will feature a smaller credit limit than the traditional sears card", pg 1 lines 17-25).

Re claims 119-120. Claims 119-120 recite similar limitations to claim 118 and thus rejected using the same art and rationale as in claim 118 above.

### ***Response to Arguments***

3. Applicant's arguments filed 04/20/07 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. The applicant argues in substance that neither Sears nor Walker teaches the limitation "modifying the duration of the trial period based on the monitored

Art Unit: 3692

customer's activities associated with the starter credit account." It is true that Sears fails to explicitly teach this limitation. However, the secondary reference, Walker compensates for the incomplete teachings of Sears. Walker teaches establishing a second period to incent the card holder to exceed his present performance, see col.11 lines 30-34). Thus the teaching "establishing a second period....," as disclosed by Walker is tantamount to the claimed limitation "modifying the duration of the trial period.....," as disclosed by the applicant. Thus, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker to incent the card holder to exceed his present performance.

The applicant further argues that neither Sears nor Walker discloses the claimed limitation " notifying the customer of unsatisfied predetermined criteria during the trial period." It is true that Sears fails to teach the above-mentioned claimed limitation. However, the secondary reference, Walker compensates for the incomplete teachings of Sears. Walker teaches that "CCI 200 outputs a periodic account statement to inform card holder 112 of the reward offer. The periodic account statement includes the performance target, the target period and the reward terms to induce card holder 112 to behave in a manner prescribed by the credit card issuer and achieve the communicated performance target during the target period. Although the periodic statement of the present embodiment is a written communication between the issuer and the card holder, the communication could take any number of forms including updating a database accessible by the card holder or transmitting an electronic or facsimile representation of a periodic statement, see col9 lines 42-55, also see fig.6

elements 624 and 628. The issuance of a periodic account statement taught by Walker is akin to the limitation "notifying the customer of unsatisfied predetermined criteria during the trial period," as disclosed by the applicant. Thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker to inform the cardholder of their accounts status.

The applicant further argues that Sears fails to disclose the claimed limitation "determining a group of customers with existing credit histories who have not previously applied for the standard credit account and are eligible for the starter credit account," Contrary to the applicant's assertion, Sears makes this disclosure (i.e., consumers with very thin and non-existed credit histories, pg 1 lines 18-20). The examiner maintains that consumers with non-existed credit histories certainly have not previously applied for the standard credit account.

The applicant further argues that Sears fails to disclose notifying the customer of a third credit limit while the customer is provided the Second, credit limit. It is true that Sears fails to teach the above-mentioned claimed limitation. However, the secondary reference, Walker compensates for the incomplete teachings of Sears. Walker teaches that "CCI 200 outputs a periodic account statement to inform card holder 112 of the reward offer. The periodic account statement includes the performance target, the target period and the reward terms to induce card holder 112 to behave in a manner prescribed by the credit card issuer and achieve the communicated performance target during the target period. Although the periodic statement of the present embodiment is a written communication between the issuer and the card holder, the communication

Art Unit: 3692

could take any number of forms including updating a database accessible by the card holder or transmitting an electronic or facsimile representation of a periodic statement, see col.9 lines 42-55, also see fig.6 elements 624 and 628, transmit reward offers to card holders, see col.4 lines 40-65). The examiner maintains that raising the credit limit from one credit limit level to a higher credit limit level is part of the reward offer that Walker teaches issuer extends to the cardholder for keeping their accounts in good standing. Thus since Walker teaches the issuing of a periodic account statement to inform card holder of the reward offer i.e., increased credit limit; lowered APR etc, the examiner further maintains that the issuing of a periodic account statement to inform card holder of the reward offer is akin to notifying the customer of a third credit limit while the customer is provided the Second credit limit. At least for this reason , Walker certainly teaches the claimed limitation "notifying the customer of a third credit limit while the customer is provided the Second credit limit." Thus, it would have been obvious to combine the teachings of Sears and Walker in order to better manage individual accounts to maximize profit per account.

The applicant further argues that the examiner fails to address the recitations of claim 42. The examiner maintains that claim 42 recites similar limitation to claim 10, and thus rejected using the same art and rationale as in the rejection of claim 10.

The applicant further argues that neither Sears nor Walker discloses the claimed limitation-notifying customers of an increased credit limit that will be provided to the customer if the customer satisfies predetermined criteria." The examiner advises the applicant to look at the rejection of said claim 37 supra.

Art Unit: 3692

All in all, the applicant argues that neither Sears nor Walker discloses the claimed limitation "changing the second interest rate to a third interest rate that is higher than the first interest rate, when it is determined that the customer has made the predetermined number of on-time payments associated with the second credit account." Sears does not explicitly teach the above mentioned claimed limitation, however, Walker does. Walker discloses changing the second interest rate to a third interest rate that is higher than the first interest rate, when it is determined that the customer has made the predetermined number of on-time payments associated with the second credit account (i.e., REWARD OFFER, reduced APR, see table 11, col.9 lines 1-14). Thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the teachings of Walker into the Sears to encourage customers to keep their account in good standing.

### ***Conclusion***

**THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of

Art Unit: 3692


the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to OJO O. OYEBISI whose telephone number is (571) 272-8298. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30A.M-5:30P.M.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, RICHARD E. CHILCOT can be reached on (571)272-6777. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

\*\*\*

 7/16/07  
JAMES A. KRAMER  
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER  
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600